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MODERN LANGUAGE NOTES.

Baltimore, March, 1897.

RICHARD MULCASTER, AN ELIZABETHAN PHILOLOGIST.

DURING the sixteenth century the English language had no place in the curriculum of the schools. The schoolmasters contented themselves with giving primary instruction in English reading, and at once passed to the traditional classic language as a medium for scholastic attainments, leaving it to the poet, the playwright, and the theologian to "amend" the "base" tongue. The statesman and the merchant may have looked with scorn on the useless baggage of Latin and Greek, but it never occurred to them that they could substitute English for the dead languages; and, indeed, of what value would it have been to them beyond the confines of their little island? They turned their attention to French, Spanish, and Italian as profitable studies in their intercourse with strangers.

There were but few men who dared to think of their mother tongue as fit for literary purposes, and none who were bold enough to hold learned discourse in English. Nor did this prejudice entirely disappear in the seventeenth century, and as late as 1650 Freckno, a distinguished traveler, spoke with contempt of English. After surveying the extent of the principal continental languages, and enumerating the countries in which each had served him, he concludes his remarks by saying that Latin and English had served him only "to stop holes with."

It cannot surprise us, then, that not a book was written to establish rules of grammar in the everchanging language, or to decide what flotsam of newly coined words was to be saved and fixed in the language that was being "amended." On the slightest provocation, foreign words without any change of their strange garbs were incorporated, though native terms could have easily been found.

When at last in 1623 Cockeram's dictionary, quite appropriately surnamed "an interpreter of hard English words," appeared, the dramatist John Ford was glad that

"Gallants therefore skip no more from hence
To Italie, France, Spaine, and with expence
Waste time and faire estates, to learne new fashions
Of complementall phrases, smooth temptations
To glorious beggary; Here let them hand
This Booke; here studie, read, and understand;
Then shall they find varietie at home,
As curious as at Paris, or at Rome;"

while John Day said of Cockeram:

"A rude pile
Of barbarous sillables into a stile,
Gentle and smooth thou hast reduc't: pure gold
Thou hast extracted out of worthlesse mold."

All linguistic activity of England in the sixteenth century was directed towards the foreign languages, French receiving the lion's share of attention. In 1530 Palsgrave wrote his large "Leclarissement de la langue françoise;" in 1572 Higgins added a French column to Huloet's English-Latin dictionary, and this creditable performance was superseded in Shakespeare's lifetime by Cotgrave's great dictionary. The Spanish found its exponents in Rich. Percivall, who wrote a short dictionary and grammar in 1591, and in Minshew, who enlarged them considerably and added dialogues in 1599. The works of this accomplished linguist are wonders of learning, and outstrip all similar publications of his time. Thomas Williams brought out a dictionary for Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, and an Italian grammar in 1550, and Florio made the study of Italian popular by his dictionary of 1597, which, in its second edition of 1611, far surpassed any other Italian dictionary both for its completeness and its phonetic notation.

Even the Welsh language had found its scholar and philologist, but when we turn to English we find nothing that could distantly be compared with these works. Whatever little effort was put forth towards improving the language, centered about spelling reforms. The learned were prompted to it not by any scientific investigations of phonetics, but by a feeling of shame that their rude language should be so different from the apparently simple tongues of the continent. They based the changes which they proposed on no philosophical inductions or historical studies, and their abortive systems made no impression on their contemporaries. Their methods bear

a striking resemblance to modern phonetic spellings which, like their venerable predecessors, will remain only to adorn the pages of worm-eaten books.

Beyond spelling, English philology did not move. There was but one man in all those days of apathy for the mother-tongue who loved its past, did not despair of the present, and predicted for it a glorious future, a man who indicated the road on which it must travel towards its destiny, and who himself took the initiative in improving it. That man was Richard Mulcaster. His contemporaries did not appreciate him; the men of the succeeding centuries have entirely forgotten him. It is the purpose of this paper to save him from oblivion and to indicate his high deserts in English philology.

Nearly all we know of Mulcaster is given in Stowe's *Survey of London*:

"Richard Mulcaster M. A. of a good family in Carlisle in Cumberland. He was also bred in Eaton School and chosen thence to King's College in Cambridge; thence elected student of Christ's Church, Oxon; anno 1555. He seems to have been the first Master of Merchant Taylors School, in the Parish of St. Laurence Pountney, London. For he was chosen hither, anno 1561, where after he had spent five and twenty years, he became Master of St. Paul's School. For the use of this school he wrote a catechism in Latin, in Hexameter and Pentameter verses. He also published two books in English, while he was Master of Merchant Taylors School, about the instruction of children in 4to. The former he presumed to dedicate to the queen, because it pretended a common good: for in it he laid down Positions for the training up of children in learning and health. The latter which he called the *Elementarie*, teaching the right writing of English, he dedicated to the Earl of Leicester."

"He was a man of great account in those times, and for his knowledge in the Oriental languages was valued by that great English Rabbi Hugh Broughton. He had the honour to be Master to Bishop Andrews, while he governed Merchant Taylors School. He died Parson of Stanford-Rivers in Essex (in 1611), whither he retired two or three years before his death."

A few more scanty details of his life may be gleaned from the appendix to the reprint of his "Positions," by R. H. Quick (Longmans, Green, & Co., 1888), where also an estimate of Mulcaster's activity as a teacher will be found.

His sound system of education included music, drawing and playing, and he demanded that as much care should be exercised on the physical development of children as on their studies; accordingly, the mental training of bodily weak boys was to begin much later than that of entirely healthy ones. Girls were to receive a high degree of scholastic education, including foreign tongues and "some" rhetoric and logic. Above all, a thorough elementary instruction must precede the higher studies, and the Universities ought to become seminaries of thorough grammar teachers.

In all these views, the wisdom of which we of the end of the nineteenth century are beginning to appreciate, Mulcaster was beyond his age. Our public schools have lately introduced music and drawing into their curriculum, but gymnastics still begs for admission in most schools; our girls receive all the attention that Mulcaster prescribed for them, and some of the Universities have created chairs of Pedagogics.

Such were his practical ideas about education, and many young men must have been benefited by them during the half century in which he exercised his art of teaching. But greater yet, though silent and unacknowledged, was his influence on the development of the English language and its introduction in the schools and among the learned. This he accomplished by his work entitled, *The first Part of the Elementarie which entreateth chiefe of the right writing of our English tung, set furth by Richard Mulcaster, Imprinted at London by Thomas Vautroullier dwelling in the blak-friers by Lud-gate, 1582.*

This was the first attempt in the sixteenth century at writing a philosophical treatise in English, and it needed courage to make the innovation,

"for som be of opinion, that we should neither write of anie philosophical argument, nor philosophicallie of anie slight argument in our English tung, bycause the vnlearned vnderstand it not, the learned esteeme it not, as a thing of difficultie to the one, and no delite to the other."

He was led to write it, he tells us, from historical considerations. The Latin tongue had grown from a rustic speech of circumscribed limits to embrace all sciences and arts; it was

first planted in England by force of conquest, and the use of it for matters of learning continued, though the conquest had expired :

"There be two speciall considerations, which kepe the Latin, and other learned tungs, tho chefelie the Latin, in great countenance among vs, the one thereof is the knowledge, which is registred in them, the other is the conference, which the learned of Europe do commonlie vse by them both in speaking and writing. Which two considerations being fullie answered, that we seke them from profit and kepe them for that conference, whatsoever else maie be don in our tung, either to serue privat vses, or the beautifying of our speche, I do not se but it maie well be admitted, euen tho in the end it displaced the Latin, as the Latin did others, and furnished itself by the Latin learning. For is it not indeede a marvellous bondage, to becom servants to one tung for learning sake, the most of our time, with losse of most time, whereas we maie have the verie sam treasur in our own tung, with the gain of most time? our own bearing the ioyful title of our own libertie and fredom, the Latin tung remembering vs of our thraldom and bondage? I love Rome, but London better, I fauor Italie, but England more. I honor the Latin, but I worship the English."

Never before had such an enthusiasm been shown for the English language. Ascham had pointed out that the English language could be used for literary purposes, but Mulcaster demanded that it should. He was not blind to the imperfections of the language and admitted its "uncouth" condition and "lack of cunning," but he believed these to be mere accidents of the time which could easily be overcome. He met all objections that might have been urged against him by a series of unanswerable argument: 1. the gain of time by using the native tongue "while ye be pilgrims to learning by lingring;" 2. the language is uncouth because unused; 3. it can be purged and "fined," even as Latin, or any other language, had been; 4. the small compass of the language which did not stretch even over all Britain is no obstacle, and unless it be used, English would disappear; 5. rare cunning will come to England if wits bend their minds towards the improvement of the language, and foreign students will come to us for increase of their knowledge; 6. "our religion condemns not anie ornament of tung which does serue the truth and presumeth not aboue;" 7. the conference of the learned will

not cease tho' Latin be not the medium of intercourse; "the question is not to disgrace Latin, but to grace our own."

Mulcaster did not stop at ejaculations and content himself with the expression of enthusiasm, he proceeded to give practical informations in regard to the methods that had to be used in order to improve the English language. He was the first to point out the need of a dictionary :

"It were a thing verie praiseworthy in my opinion, and no lesse profitable then praiseworthy, if som one well learned and as laborious a man wold gather all the words we vse in our English tung, whether naturall or incorporate, out of all professions, as well learned as not, into one dictionarie, and besides the right writing, which is incident to the alphabet, wold open unto vs therein both their naturall force, and their proper vse: that by his honest travell we might be able to iudge of our own tung, which we have by rote, as we ar of others, which we learn by rule. The want thereof is the onlie cause why that verie manie men, being excellentlie well learned in foren speche, can hardlie discern what theie have at home, still shooting fair but oft missing far, hard censors ouer others, ill executors themselves."

It is hard to believe our eyes when we see such advanced statements made in the sixteenth century. Neither his contemporaries nor the learned of the next century could rise to his height, and the succession of lexicographers, Bullokar, Blount, Phillips and Coles, made only laborious collections of unusual words in the language. One hundred and forty years passed from the enunciation of the right principle of lexicography, before Bailey's dictionary appeared which pretended to give *all* words. But neither Bailey nor Johnson has incorporated all of Mulcaster's injunctions. It was left to Webster "to open vnto vs both the naturall force, and the proper use of words." Webster bears a striking similarity to Mulcaster, of whom he probably knew nothing, in more than one respect.

Mulcaster urged also the necessity of a grammar and promised to write one, but so far as we know he never published it. It is, however, a noteworthy fact that the first grammar by Bullokar (not the lexicographer) appeared four years after the necessity for one had been pointed out by Mulcaster. This "Brefe Gram-

mar" and that of Stockwood were but weak performances. Ben Jonson composed a large grammar, but it was consumed in the fire of his study, and we possess only his lengthy notes, or probably parts, of his grammar, which were published three years after his death, in 1640. From these we confidently conclude that even he was indebted to Mulcaster, for although we can only conjecture this in regard to the grammar proper, his introduction dealing on the value of letters, on accent and spelling, is only a condensation of some chapters in the *Elementarie*. Jonson did not scruple to use the same examples, nay, even to copy literally, whole paragraphs.

And now we come to the main subject treated in the *Elementarie*, in which our author shows a remarkable appreciation of the historical method.

The orthography of the English language had troubled many minds before his time, and influential statesmen, such as Cheke and Smith, had proposed an entire change of the alphabet, so as to make spelling phonetic. Others again clung to the customary method of writing, which was by no means in a settled state but varied from author to author, nay, as we all know, was never consistently carried out in the writings of any one man. While the latter were swayed by sentiment to hold on to the inheritance of their fathers, the first were led by their linguistic accomplishments to perceive the insufficiency of the old way and to desire a change.

Mulcaster, too, acknowledged the imperfection of the writing, but to remedy it he proceeded to investigate the expedients used by other tongues under similar conditions:

"In examining the right of our writing, I begin at that method, which the learned tungs vsed, to find out the like right in their own writing, when it was in like question that ours now is."

This he does conscientiously, as the only way out of the difficulty, for "it best besemes a scholer to procede by Art in anie recouerie from the clawes of ignorance."

Languages, he says, passed through three stages of development as regards their spelling. At first the spelling was phonetic ("swaie of *sound*"), then etymological and historical considerations (*reason* and *custom*) marred

the original phonetic forms; lastly comes the restoration of phonetic spelling "by the mean of Art," as far as is consistent with the preservation of the historical continuance of the language (*reason* and *custom* ioyned with Art).

Mulcaster proceeds to point out the natural decay and change of sounds and the consequent discord between the spoken sounds and their written forms; the confusion which of necessity ensued was in a manner settled by a "dictatorlike" authority which prescribed a certain spelling, but finally Art

"toke himself to som one period in the tung, of most and best account, and therefor fittest to be made a pattern for others to follow."

"Such a period in the Greke tung was the time when Demosthenes liued and that of the learned race of the father philosophers; such a period in the Latin tung was the time when Tullie liued, and those of that age: such a period in the English tung I take this to be in our daies, for both the pen and the speche."

We must remember that the proud assertion of the classical period of the English language was made at a time when Shakespeare was but eighteen years old and had not yet entered the arena of literature, and that the future has in every way justified Mulcaster's claims.

The causes why some devised orthographies ("wherein the parties themselves no dout deserue som praise and thanks to") did not and could not take place, he found in their breaking entirely with the traditions of the nation, and he predicted that no such violent revolution would ever be welcomed by a people that thought too well of its past.

"For a new writing cuming in vnder hand and the old charact growing out of knowledge, all that evidence in whatsoever English kind, must nedes com ouer to the new fashion, or be subject to the frump, and remain wormeaten like an old relik, and so to be red as the Roman religion, written vnder Numa Pompilius was by them of Tullies time, when everie word was so uncouth and strange as if it had com from som other world then where it was penned. . . . But this amendment of theirs is to far fet, and without the help thereof we vnderstand our print and pen, our euidence and other writing in what kinde soeuer. And tho we grant som imperfection, as in a tung not yet rakt from her trubled lees, yet we do not confesse that it is to be perfited either by altering the form, or by encreasing the number of our acquainted letters, but onelie by obseru-

ing where the tung by hirself and hir ordinarie *custom* doth yeild to the fining, as the old, and therefore the best, method doth lead vs."

In a long and complete argument he reasserts the reign of *custom*, and points out how any spelling reform can succeed only if it bear in mind the imperative demands of *custom*. According to him

"the right writing of our English therefor is a certain reasonable course, to direct the pen by such rules as ar most conformable, to the proprietie of *sound*, the consideration of *reason*, and the smoothing of *custom* ioyntlie."

I shall here indicate some of the reforms he proposed. It will be readily seen that many of these were independently hit upon by Webster, and now form the distinctive features of American spelling. Such are the ending *or* in *favor*, *honor*, *labor*, the suffix *er* for *re* in *center*, the single *t* in *perfiting*. Capital letters are to begin sentences, proper names and Roman numerals; this rule, so common to-day, was not observed by any one in the next century, and makes a page of Mulcaster's book look more like one but lately printed. As a rule, final *e* indicates a long preceding syllable; final *y* is long as in *deny*, *cry*; *ie* is short, hence the writing *manie*, *oneli*, but before the ending *ing*, *y* must be written as in *denying*, *carrying*. Consonants are to be doubled only when they belong to two syllables, hence *put* and *putting*, except in case of final *ss* and *ll*. *F* is to be substituted for the needless *ph*; *all* is to be written with one *l* before consonants, as in *albeit*, *almost*. Words accepted from abroad are to be spelled in their foreign way, unless they be entirely enfranchised, when they ought to be modeled on the English fashion.

There are many more changes introduced by him but I cannot dwell on them here, and many more which Mulcaster thought might be introduced by the judicious.

"Thus much have I don for the right writing of our English tung, desiring my cuntriemen to think well of my labor and themselves to travell in furnishing out the rest which I can not deal with, if theie like of that which I have hirherto don, if not I wold be glad to be directed myself by som president of another which shall taste of iudgement."

How does it happen that this precursor of

English philology, this master mind and reformer has been so entirely forgotten, that English literatures do not record his name, and works on English philology do not mention him? Mr. Quick thinks that the reason lies in the obscurity of his style, but this I cannot admit, for while his diction is by no means easy and flowing, it is perfectly clear and consistent. Nor can I agree with Mr. Quick that Mulcaster's pedantry and hardness of expression served Shakespeare as an excuse for portraying him as Holofernes in *Love's Labour Lost*. Mulcaster was easily forgotten and overlooked because he was too advanced for his age. His contemporary and successor as Master of St. Paul's School, Gill, did not learn much from him as regards philological methods, and returned in his *Logonomia* to the phonetic notation of Cheke, Smith, Hart and Bullokar. Gill could not grasp Mulcaster's ideas, and he thought that Mulcaster had wasted too much time and good paper in defending custom.

But with all that Mulcaster's influence must have made itself felt. We know that Bishop Andrews and the poet Spenser, had been his pupils, that he was on a footing of friendship with Sidney, and we have seen that Ben Jonson had profited by his method. How many more were under obligations, directly or indirectly, to this Elizabethan philologist we cannot now tell. Perhaps a close scrutiny of the grammars and dictionaries and English scientific tracts that appeared subsequently to the publication of the "Elementarie," will disclose to us their indebtedness to their distinguished advocate.

Shakespeare was barely noticed by his contemporaries, but the following centuries have established his fame. Mulcaster, who in a less grateful way had directed the minds of the young and imbued them with a love for the English language as no one before him or after him, who has shown the right way to improve the native tongue and to keep it within well defined bounds, Mulcaster, who had dared face the scorn of the learned and the sneer of the unlearned, who had done for the language what literature and theology would never have accomplished without the aid of the schools, is not known today.

His importance as a teacher has been pointed out by Mr. Quick. It is now time to open for him the gates of the histories of language and literature and to enthrone him high in the palace of English learning.

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NOTES ON THE SYNTAX OF THE
FRENCH VERB IN WRITERS
OF THE SEVENTEENTH
CENTURY.

ALMOST all French verbs were at first indifferently used as intransitives, transitives and reflexives. Dr. E. Etienne in his *Essai de Grammaire de l'Ancien Français* quotes, on page 223, thirty-two such verbs without exhausting the list, and likewise, on page 222, forty-two reflexive verbs which have ceased to be so construed. The former class alone are supported by quotations from old texts. Only later in the evolution of the language did the one or the other of these several uses prevail to the exclusion of the others. Vaugelas (i, 104, 105: quoted further on in full), Patru, Thomas Corneille, and the Academy, endeavor to react against this tendency, and formulate rules. It is interesting to observe in writers of the seventeenth century how far they continue to yield to old usage in spite of the logic of grammarians.

A demonstration of this is attempted under the following heads:¹

1. Intransitive verbs used as transitives with a causative meaning.
 2. Intransitive verbs used as transitives without a causative meaning.
 3. Transitive verbs used as intransitives.
 4. Intransitive verbs with a pronominal form.
 5. Intransitive verbs with a reflexive meaning.
 6. Reflexive verbs with a passive meaning.
- I. INTRANSITIVE VERBS USED AS TRANSITIVE VERBS WITH A CAUSATIVE MEANING.

CESSER.—“Vous avez cessé vos désordres, mais vous ne les avez pas expiés” (Massillon,

¹ The classification and general treatment are those presented by Dr. Ferdinand Brunot in his lectures on Historical Grammar at the Sorbonne.

Petit Carême). Vaugelas notes (i, 404) that the verb *cesser* is becoming transitive, and adds: “Nos bons auteurs en sont pleins.”

CROITRE.—Vaugelas (i, 436), “Ce verbe est neutre et non actif.” Chifflet (iii), Patru and the Academy hold the same opinion. Still all writers use it transitively; Corneille (*Cid* ii, 8), “croître mes malheurs;” Racine (*Esther* 946), “croître son audace:” (*Bajazet* ii, 3) “croître nos misères.”

CROULER.—Ruled out by Malherbe in, “crouler les fondements.” Still La Fontaine says: “Jupin croulant la terre les abîma sous des rochers affreux” (*Ballade au Roi, Poés. Div.* lvii), and du Vair (ed. 1625, in fol., p. 346): “combien y a-t-il de villes qui ont été croulées.”

DERIVER.—Vaugelas (ii, 385) says it is intransitive, it is nevertheless found with the meaning of *faire dériver*, ‘to run adrift.’

ÉCLORE.—“Ce n’est pas à dire que la nature ne soit capable d’éclore ces accidents” (Malherbe ii, 83).

GERMER.—“C’est une semence illustre, vive et forte, qui des nouveaux martyrs germe une ample moisson” (Corn., *Hymen* xii, ix, 695). “Que la terre s’ouvre et qu’elle germe le sauveur” (Bibl. de Sacy, *Isaïe* xi, v, 8).

PASSER POUR = FAIRE PASSER POUR.—“Il passe pour tyran quoique s’y fait maître” (Corn., *Cinna* 485; *Rodogune* 1747).

PENCHER.—Criticised by Vaugelas (ii, 444). “Non qu’une folle ardeur de son côté me penche” (Corn., *Cid* v, 4). “Pour sentir notre liberté, il faut faire l’épreuve dans les choses où rien ne nous penche” (Bossuet, *Libre arbitre*, p. 2).

PROSPÉRER.—Criticised by Vaugelas (ii, 391); in frequent use with a causative meaning. “Nous prions le Créateur qu’il vous veuille bienheurer et prospérer vos bonnes et saintes entreprises” (Villeroy, *Mém.* t. i., p. 293).

TOMBER.—Rejected by Malherbe, and later by Vaugelas (ii, 397).

SORTIR.—Already criticised by Béroalde de Verville and, perhaps, by Étienne Pasquier, and again by Vaugelas, Patru, Thomas Corneille, the Academy confirming the judgment. It is still found, however: “L’ennemi d’autre part, superbe d’équipage, sort l’enclos de la ville” (Rotrou iii, 967: *Les Sosies* i, 3).